

Sermon 2010 Good Friday

Text: Luke 23:44-45a

Theme: "Darkness to Light:

Every eighteen months, somewhere around the world, the sun goes black in the middle of the day. One minute the day is bright and sunny; the next minute the sun goes dark, and you can even see the stars in the middle of the day. It's called a solar eclipse. You have to be in just the right place to see the eclipse, but somewhere on earth it can be seen every eighteen months. A total eclipse lasts only about seven minutes. It's beautiful and rare.

Far rarer is when the sun literally fails to shine. It has happened only twice, ever. The first time, the people of God were slaves in the land of Egypt. Their masters were cruel, so God lifted up a man to lead his people out of their slavery and to help him make his point about hurting God's people, he came armed with a few plagues. Exodus 2:

"During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew."

Moses was sent to command Pharaoh to let God's people go. Pharaoh refused to free his slaves, so God began to send plague after plague. The ninth plague God sent was darkness.

"So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived."

For three days, the land of Egypt was completely dark. The people of God, who lived nearby, had light, but the Egyptians were forced to live in darkness for three entire days. This was no eclipse. Solar eclipses last only seven minutes. This lasted three days. God was judging sin and freeing his people.

Jesus came into this world and said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). Darkness is a bit scary and certainly more dangerous than the daylight. More crimes are committed at night. Even though no monsters live under our beds, children are afraid of the possibility usually at night. We have fewer fears during the day, but once the light goes dark, imaginations run wild. We are curious about strange shapes during the day, but a strange shape or shadow at night makes our pulse run faster until we figure out what it is. Deep down, something about the dark unsettles us. We fear that which we cannot see and we live in an enlightened age. Imagine those Egyptians living three days with no light and not knowing what caused it.

Jesus dispels darkness. He calls us away from dark deeds. He calls us away from dark thoughts. He calls us away from dark words. He calls us away from the darkness we are tempted to explore and "into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

When the sun rose on that first Good Friday, Jesus was in front of men who were conspiring in the darkness. All through the night, they had been harassing him and mocking him and trying to condemn him of crimes they had conjectured in

midnight councils. They waited until dark to arrest Jesus, and through the night they did not leave him alone. Finally, as the sun rose, they took him to Pontius Pilate and did the darkest thing of all. They demanded that Pilate put Jesus to death on the cross. Not three hours after the sun's light flooded the land, Pilate gave the order for their dark demands. Jesus was nailed to that cross on that first Good Friday. The sun rose higher in the sky, shedding its light on all those with darkness in their hearts, and finally it reached its highest point—noon. There, from its highest point, the brightest place from which the sun could shine down, "the sun's light failed" (Lk 23:45). It failed for three hours, until the last dying breath of Jesus was breathed out. The sky was as black as this robe.

This was no eclipse. This was no solar flare. This was an act of God. It was as if the sun, which was created through Jesus, was reeling at how creation had rebelled against its Maker. Here God was judging, as he did in Egypt. God was judging sin. He was judging your sins and my sins, which were nailed to that cross in the body of Jesus. There God was judging sin and, as he did in Egypt, he was setting his people free. He was setting us free from our sins and giving us life through the death of his Son.

Jesus Christ, was put in a dark hole of a tomb, and he was left there to stay. Yet in the darkness of that grave, His light returned. The tomb could not hold him. His light was too bright. Death could not hold him in. Death could not keep its dark grip on Jesus, for He is the light of the world. Jesus rose and so we too will rise. We have no fear of darkness. AMEN.